

# “Our Redeemer Has Come”

Mark 1:4-11

During the Advent season, we spoke of John the Baptist as being the dominant Advent figure. His calling was to “prepare the way for the Lord.” His ministry was meant to prepare the children of Abraham to receive the Christ, the one who would redeem all of God’s children from our slavery to sin. And at Christmas, we celebrated that our Redeemer has come.

But John is not only an important Advent figure, but he is also a major character in the Epiphany season. The Epiphany season is where Jesus is revealed as the Christ, the Redeemer, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Our Redeemer has come, and He has revealed Himself to us.

During the Advent season, we spoke of how strange and odd that the Redeemer of Israel would be born as the child of a girl from the tiny little out-of-the-way town of Nazareth. That is not the kind of place one would expect the King of the Jews, the Son of God to live.

Today, we witness the beginning of Jesus’ ministry – His Baptism. Christ’s Baptism is a marvelous event; yet it is a little puzzling for several reasons. First, why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, someone who was totally innocent of all guilt, need to be baptized by John? Wasn’t John’s

baptism a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” [Mk. 1:4]? Jesus certainly had no need for forgiveness. He was blameless of any sin. He was totally innocent. Baptism takes away our guilt. It is puzzling that the sinless Son of God would be baptized.

Also, as we are now in the Epiphany Season which is the period of the church year when we focus our attention on the events of Christ’s life when He was revealed to world. At His Baptism, Jesus was revealed as the Son of God in spectacular fashion. God the Father Himself speaks from heaven. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove. The three persons of the Trinity are all present and active – just like we heard in the account of creation from Genesis.

Jesus kicking off His ministry in this manner should not be puzzling or surprising, but where this happened makes no sense from a public relations standpoint. Once again, Jesus is in an out-of-the-way, isolated place. As I have mentioned, since returning from Israel, this wilderness is bare. There is nothing out there. This is not the place you start a popular movement. Yet, there was a crowd present to witness this event.

Mark tells us that “all Jerusalem was going out to [John]”. There is nothing out there that would entice a person to walk the 12 miles from Jerusalem to the Jordan River – except the Word of God was being preached; people were being washed clean of their sins; hearts were being prepared for the coming of the Christ.

The guilt of sin; the Word of promise; this is what brought the crowds out to be baptized by John. It was the guilt of sin and the Word of promise

which brought Jesus out to be baptized also. Christ never sinned; He was blameless in that regard. But he was not innocent, because He was guilty of all our sin.

Christ's Baptism is a beautiful, glorious exchange. Christ does the will of His Father in heaven. He took upon Himself all the sins of the world, none of which He had committed, carried them to Calvary, and allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross as the perfect sacrifice to cover and pay for all of those transgressions. He carried the guilt of sin; He is the Word of promise. He chose to stand accused and place the burden of our sins upon His shoulders, and in exchange He clothed us in His perfect righteousness and holiness.

In His Baptism, Jesus Christ's true nature is revealed to all people: He is the Son of God, He is the Savior of the world, He is our Redeemer. As soon as John baptizes Jesus, God the Father speaks from heaven and says, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." The Father in heaven is not "well pleased" just because Christ gave us the example of Baptism, as if all that were going on here was Jesus making a symbolic gesture for the sake of His disciples.

In Christ's Baptism, Jesus did set the example for us to follow: that we are to go and do likewise; however, that is not the most important aspect of His Baptism. The Father in heaven is "well pleased" because the Son whom He loves has willingly accepted the humiliating, painful task set before Him. The Father in heaven is "well pleased" because the Son whom He loves has willingly traded places with each

of you, so that your sin is no longer on you, but rests solely upon the shoulders of Christ.

He willingly stands between you and the wrath of God's Law pointing at the guilt of your sin. He has taken that from you.

Your salvation is complete in Christ. There is nothing that you can do to make yourselves more forgiven. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, you were washed clean. Jesus walked away from His Baptism carrying the sins of the whole world. He is the Redeemer who God had promised.

That is what John is alluding to with his comment about not being worthy to untie the strap of the Redeemer's sandals. The best example of this is seen in the book of Ruth when Boaz fulfills his duty as the kinsman-redeemer, buys the land, marries Ruth, and continues her dead husband's family tree. To make this transaction complete, in the presence of the elders of the city, Boaz takes off his sandal. That is how the redeemer was identified. John says, "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie His sandals."

On the day that Christ was baptized, He began His earthly ministry. Our Redeemer was identified. When this occurred, God's plan for your salvation was set in motion. The Word of promise was fulfilled. There was nothing that could prevent God from fulfilling His Word. Our Redeemer has come. Amen.